

United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics

# ARS □ ERS □ NASS □ NIFA

## *Policies and Procedures*

**Title:** Recruitment, Retention, and Relocation Incentives and Other Special Pay

**Number:** P&P 412.5.v.5 - REE

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**Originating Office:** Human Resources Division (HRD)  
Compensation and Operations Services Branch  
Agricultural Research Service

**This Replaces:** P&P 412.5 dated March 10, 2014.

**Distribution:** REE offices in Headquarters, Areas, and Field Locations

This P&P provides guidance and information on recruitment, retention, relocation and travel incentives, pay and travel advances, superior qualifications and pre-employment interviews, as well as other allowances, differentials and repayment of student loans.

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## **1. Recruitment Relocation and Retention Incentives**

**See Departmental Directive:**

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-manual-4050-575-001>

## **2. ARS Demonstration Project**

This project authority applies only to ARS due to specific legislation passed by congress. Recruitment incentives for ERS, NASS, and NIFA are found under Section 2 of this document.

ARS Demonstration Project cash payments have no prescribed limit on the amount of payment that may be negotiated. The amount will depend upon budget availability and the agreement of the Area Director. The cash payments may be made by one of the following means:

- lump sum upon entrance on duty;
- incrementally over a period not to exceed 36 months; or
- lump sum deferred until completion of a specified term of service, not to exceed 36 months.

These payments will be paid according to the schedule shown on the Deferred Cash Payment Agreement, ARS-43. Employees agree that no outstanding deferred or incremental amounts will be paid in the event they are no longer employed by ARS. If a deferred payment schedule is arranged, each scheduled payment must be initiated with an SF-52, Request for Personnel Action. Payments are issued after the first salary check and are subject to tax withholdings. The schedule of payment is the length of the service agreement, not to exceed 36 months. Service under one service agreement will run concurrently with service under any other simultaneous or subsequent service agreements in effect.

## **3. Payment of Travel and Transportation Expenses for New Appointees and Pre-Employment Interviews**

**See Departmental Directive:**

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-regulation-4050-572-001>

## **4. Superior Qualifications and Special Needs Pay-Setting**

See Departmental Directive:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-regulation-4050-531-002>

## **5. Pay and Travel Advances**

### **5.1 Policies and Procedures**

Requests for pay advances will be handled through the Financial Management Division's (FMD) P&P 327.5 – *Advance Payment (ARS)*. It is REE's decision not to use the personnel system for such payments. Travel advances must be handled through FMD's P&P 342.03 – *Travel Advances*.

## **6. REE Student Loan Repayment Plan**

See Departmental Directive:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-regulation-4050-537>

## **7. Hazardous and Environmental Pay**

### **7.1 Purpose**

Hazardous duty pay and environmental differentials are additional pay for the performance of hazardous duty or duty involving physical hardship.

### **7.2 Background**

Law and regulation intend that employees receive additional pay when exposed to hazards of an unusually severe nature. There are distinctly separate systems established for wage grade and GS employees. Environmental Differential Pay (EDP) is for wage grade employees and Hazard Pay Differential (HPD) is for GS employees. Schedules of categories for which differentials are payable are established and periodically revised by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

## **7.3 Policy**

It is REE policy that all hazards, physical hardships, and working conditions of an unusually severe nature will be eliminated or reduced to the lowest level possible. All employees are responsible for identifying and immediately bringing to the attention of management any element of danger or risk which causes or contributes to a hazard, physical hardship, or working condition of an unusually severe nature.

## **7.4 Responsibilities**

Responsible supervisors and managers must immediately notify the appropriate safety and health officer of the existence of hazardous conditions, particularly ones which may warrant hazardous duty or environmental differential pay. The safety and health official should inspect the worksite as soon as possible, determine the extent of the hazard, propose abatement procedures, and set a date for correction of the hazard. If abatement cannot be accomplished immediately, the safety and health official, in concert with management, should determine if the work can be allowed to continue within an acceptable level of risk. If not, the operation should be shut down until the hazard is eliminated or alleviated to an acceptable level of risk. A follow-up inspection must be conducted to ensure compliance with the established abatement procedures.

When action does not overcome these undesirable situations, EDP or HPD may be warranted for employees exposed to them if they match the categories which have been established by the Office of Personnel Management. These categories are periodically updated by that Office. The existence of EDP/HPD is not intended to condone work practices which circumvent Federal safety laws, rules, and regulations. Willful violation may subject employees to disciplinary action.

### **7.4.1 HPD**

- an HPD must be taken into account in the classification of a position;
- an HPD is “taken into account in the classification of a position” when the duty is a part of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of the incumbent of the position. In other words, the incumbent of the position is able to influence the hazardous duty, i.e., exercise knowledge, skill, and ability to reduce the risk of the hazard
- the actual circumstances of the specific hazard or physical hardship must have changed from that taken into account and described in the position description;

- using the knowledges, skills, and abilities that are described in the position description, the employee cannot control the hazard or physical hardship; thus, the risk is not reduced to a less than significant level;
- “a risk of less than significant level” is used by OPM to be consistent with generally accepted standards such as those published by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

#### **7.4.2 EPD**

- management must determine whether the local situation is covered by one or more of the defined categories;
- an employee entitled to a differential will be paid an amount equal to the percentage rate authorized by OPM for the category in which the working condition or hazard falls, multiplied by the rate for the second step of WG-10;
- an employee entitled to a differential on the basis of hours in a pay status will be paid not more than one differential for a particular period of work. The payment is computed on the basis of the highest differential rate authorized during the period of entitlement;
- an environmental differential is part of basic pay and will be used to compute premium pay, the amount from which retirement deductions are made, and the amount on which group life insurance is based.

### **7.5 Authorities**

5 U.S.C. 5545(d)  
 5 CFR 550.901  
 5 CFR 532.511

### **7.6 Definitions**

- Hazardous duty - duty performed under circumstances in which an accident could result in serious injury or death.
- Physical hardship - the duty may not in itself be hazardous, but causes extreme physical discomfort or distress and is not adequately alleviated by protective or mechanical devices.

## **7.7 Procedures**

Responsible supervisors and managers must immediately notify the appropriate safety and health officer of the existence of hazardous conditions, particularly ones which may warrant hazardous duty or environmental differential pay.

The safety and health official should inspect the worksite as soon as possible, determine the extent of the hazard, propose abatement procedures, and set a date for correction of the hazard. If abatement cannot be accomplished immediately, the safety and health official, in concert with management, should determine if the work can be allowed to continue within an acceptable level of risk. If not, the operation should be shut down until the hazard is eliminated or alleviated to an acceptable level of risk. A follow-up inspection must be conducted to ensure compliance with the established abatement procedures.

When action does not overcome these undesirable situations, EDP or HPD may be warranted for employees exposed to them if they match the categories which have been established by the Office of Personnel Management. These categories are periodically updated by that Office. The existence of EDP/HPD is not intended to condone work practices which circumvent Federal safety laws, rules, and regulations. Willful violation may subject employees to disciplinary action.

### **7.7.1 Hazard and Environmental Payments**

#### **Recommending Official**

- identifies work situations possibly warranting EDP or HPD compensation to employees by comparison to the Code of Federal Regulations and prepares request for approval.

Request should include:

- description of hazard or hardship or severe working condition;
- the frequency of exposure;
- the estimated biweekly hours of exposure per employee;
- the applicable category requested;
- the differential rate;
- the corrective action taken to eliminate or reduce the situation;
- the official authorized to assign the work;

- the official authorized to approve the payroll documentation; and
- forwards the package to the second level supervisor.

### **Second Level Supervisor and Any Other Required Intermediate Levels**

- reviews the request and forwards to the safety officer if payment is approved.

### **Safety Officer**

- reviews questioned situation in detail, including onsite study if required, and renders technical evaluation in terms of (a) the extent to which the situation matches other related categories and (b) the extent to which existing or proposed safety equipment, facilities, or procedures eliminate or degrade the impact of qualifying situations; and
- forwards the package to the final approving authority.

### **Final Approving Authority**

- reviews the package and approves or disapproves;
- notifies supervisors and union in writing of approval/disapproval and provides rationale; and
- forwards the package to the recommending official for processing.

### **Recommending Official**

- for each incident of exposure, documents the authorization for payment of the EDP/HPD by entering the appropriate code and number of hours in the Time and Attendance system;
- keeps a copy of the approval package along with the initial T&A Report for the 6-year duration of the T&A records.

## **8. Supervisory Differentials**

### **8.1 Purpose**

Authorizes payment to an employee under the General Schedule (GS) who has supervisory responsibility for one or more civilian employees not under GS (i.e., Federal Wage Schedule) if one or more of the subordinate civilian employees



would, in the absence of such a differential, be paid more than the supervisory employee.

## **8.2 Background**

The supervisory differential prevents subordinate employees from earning a higher salary than the supervisor.

## **8.3 Authorities**

5 CFR 575.401-575.407

## **8.4 Procedures**

### **Supervisor and Any Other Required Intermediate Levels**

- initiates the Recommendation and Approval of Supervisory Differentials, REE-19, and signs the first part of the form;
- initiates a Request for Personnel Action, SF-52, requesting the salary change;
- initiates a written justification outlining the necessity for granting, ending, or adjusting the differential and the impact this will have on the unit; and
- forwards these forms and memos through supervisory channels to the Budget, Fiscal and Agreements staff.

### **Budget, Fiscal and Agreements Staff**

- reviews requested amount and signs the Approval form if concurs on available funds;
- returns package if funds are not available; and
- if concurs, forwards the package to the final approving authority.

### **Final Approval Authority**

- reviews the package and approves or disapproves; and
- forwards the approved package to the Business Service Center for processing.

### **Servicing Human Resources Specialist**

- submits the required payment data to NFC via AD-343, Payroll Action Request; and

- attaches a memo to the Head, Payroll/Personnel Operations Section stating that, as an interim procedure, we wish for NFC to continue payment until we send in an AD-343 to end or change the payment.

## **Second Level Supervisor and Any Other Required Intermediate Levels**

- on December 15, March 15, June 15, and September 15 of each year conducts a manual review of each approved instance to assure that the situation warrants a differential; and
- if the situation does not warrant a differential or a change in the differential, initiates a SF-52 and a justification memo stating the reason for the termination or change.

## **9 Quarters Allowance**

### **9.1 Background**

REE employees will be required to occupy Government quarters as a condition of employment only when essential program services cannot be given if the employee lives away from the station, or Federal property cannot be adequately protected through other means. The number of REE employees who occupy Federally owned quarters as a condition of employment will be kept to an absolute minimum.

### **9.2 Responsibilities**

Recommending Official initiates form REE-16, Occupancy of Federally Owned Quarters, and has the employee sign and date the agreement; attaches a brief justification; and signs and dates the form and forwards the package to the second level supervisor.

Second Level Supervisor and Any other Required Intermediate Levels reviews the request and approves/disapproves by signing/not signing the form if the housing is available; returns package if housing is not available; and if concurs, forwards package to the selecting official who forwards it to the Property Management Officer.

Property Management Officer reviews the REE-16 and works with the Real Estate Warrant Officer (REWO) at the Business Service Center to fill out forms REE-17, Rates for Quarters and Services Furnished to Federal Employees as well as the ARS-494 Revocable Permit. Obtains the signature and date of the employee on both forms and forwards the package to the REWO.

Final Approving Authority (REWO) reviews the REE-16, REE-17, and ARS-494 forms and approves or disapproves. The REWO will update QMIS to reflect the new tenant and all approved forms will be forwarded to the servicing Human Resources Specialist at the Business Service Center for processing.

## **9.3 Procedures**

When employees who occupy Federally owned quarters as a condition of employment are transferred or reassigned to another position which also requires them to occupy such quarters, the Area/Division Directors must submit a new recommendation, justification and four copies of Occupancy of Federally Owned Quarters, REE-16, to cover the new position. If the new position does not require occupying Federally owned quarters as a condition of employment, the employees may continue living in the quarters in accordance with the provisions of the Real Property Manual, 245.1, or be required to vacate the quarters.

### **Quarters Allowances Procedures**

#### **Recommending Official**

initiates form REE-16, Occupancy of Federally Owned Quarters, and has the employee sign and date the agreement;  
attaches a brief justification; and  
signs and dates the form and forwards the package to the second level supervisor.

#### **Second Level Supervisor and Any Other Required Intermediate Levels**

reviews the request and approves or disapproves by signing or not signing the form;  
  
returns the unsigned form and the package to the selecting official;  
forwards the package to the Property Management Officer.

#### **Property Management Officer**

reviews the REE-16 Rates for Quarters and Services Furnished to Federal Employees form and, as well as the employee, signs the form if the housing is available;  
returns package if housing is not available;

fills out form REE-17, Rates for Quarters and Services Furnished to Federal Employees and ARS-494, Revocable Permit, with the assistance from the Real Estate Warrant Officer (REWO) at the Business Service Center, and obtains the signature and date of the employee;

forwards the package to the final approving authority REWO.

#### **Final Approving Authority (REWO)**

reviews the REE-16, REE-17, and ARS-494 and approves or disapproves;

Updates QMIS to reflect the new tenant; and

forwards the approved package to the Human Resources Business Service Center for processing.

## **10 Uniform Allowance**

**<http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/uniform.asp>**

### **10.1 Purpose**

The purpose of uniform allowances is to provide a stipend to eligible employees to purchase uniforms.

### **10.2 Background**

The only Agency with uniform needs is ARS.

### **10.3 Policy**

Office/Staff/Area/Division Directors decide on the necessity or desirability of furnishing uniforms to employees who have the same basic function. ARS will pay an allowance for a uniform not to exceed \$800 a year.

### **10.4 Responsibilities**

Office/Staff/Area/Division Directors decide on the necessity or desirability of furnishing uniforms to employees who have the same basic function.

Timekeepers process uniform allowances will be processed on the employee's Time and Attendance Report.

### **10.5 Authorities**

5 U.S.C. 5901 - 5903  
5 CFR part 591, subpart A

### **10.6 Procedures**

The transaction codes used for these purposes are TC 51 with suffix code 1, Uniform Allowance (Taxable) and TC 51 with suffix code 8, Uniform Allowance (Tax Exempt).

Uniform allowances may be charged to the current year and one prior year appropriation during any pay period. The proper transaction code used for this purpose is TC 51, suffix 8, Uniform Allowance (Tax Exempt).

## **11. Physicians Comparability Allowance**

The Secretary of Agriculture may enter into a service agreement with a Government physician for an allowance for a specified period of service in return for an allowance in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 per annum. Only physicians serving in positions where there is a significant recruitment and retention problem will be eligible for an allowance.

Joon Park  
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